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EXHIBIT **FEB 21 2013**
DATE **2/22/13**
NO **450**

JORY C. RUGGIERO, ESQ.

DOMENIC A. COSSI, ESQ.

February 20, 2013

Montana Legislators
Montana House of Representatives
PO Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620-0400

To whom it may concern:

I write regarding HB 450, which will require that automobile insurance pay for medical bills resulting from a car accident.

This bill will undermine the relationship that the average Montanan understands that they have with their health insurance and auto insurance company. As a matter of contract, every person that buys health insurance thinks that health insurance will pay their medical bills, regardless of how they are hurt. Every person that buys auto insurance thinks the auto insurance will pay for lost wages, pain, inability to do housework, and other activities in addition to possible payment of medical bills.

HB 450 will mean that a person who has been hurt in an automobile accident very likely will not receive the protection that they believe they have contracted for with their insurance policies. In fact, this bill will undermine the very purpose of insurance by using up available automobile insurance funds before those hurt are fully reimbursed and forcing those hurt to go after the personal assets of the person at fault.

Before you vote for this bill ask yourself if you have enough insurance to protect your personal assets if you hit someone else with your car or to pay you if you are paralyzed in an accident and can no longer work. That is what is at stake here, the lives of regular Montanans that are unfortunate enough to get into accidents, but responsible enough to have purchased insurance that they thought would protect them.

Finally, it is my understanding that hospitals have testified they will suffer if they cannot collect from automobile insurance instead of health insurance. This ignores the fact that when they have agreed to accept payment from a health insurer as a part of the PPO, this is a contract they bound themselves to thinking it would be profitable. According to the American Hospital Directory (AHD), last year all major hospitals in Montana made a profit as listed below:

- Billings Clinic - \$21 million profit
- St. Vincent's in Billings - \$13 million profit
- Benefis in Great Falls - \$15 million profit

- St. Patrick's in Missoula - \$15 million profit
- Bozeman Deaconess - \$13 million profit
- Kalispell Regional Medical Center - \$3.7 million profit
- Barrett Hospital in Dillon - \$.6 million profit
- Community Medical Center in Missoula - \$7.6 million profit
- St. James in Butte reports a loss on AHD likely due to acquisitions, but reports to the Montana Standard that its operating 2012 profit was \$2.3 million.

Thus, hospitals in Montana are not going bankrupt under the current law. In fact, these entities have shown they can all be profitable under the current legal framework. Notably, these hospitals can be profitable while also not crippling their patient's ability to be reimbursed for harm that was no fault of their own.

Thank you for your consideration,



Domenic Cossi

DAC:mro